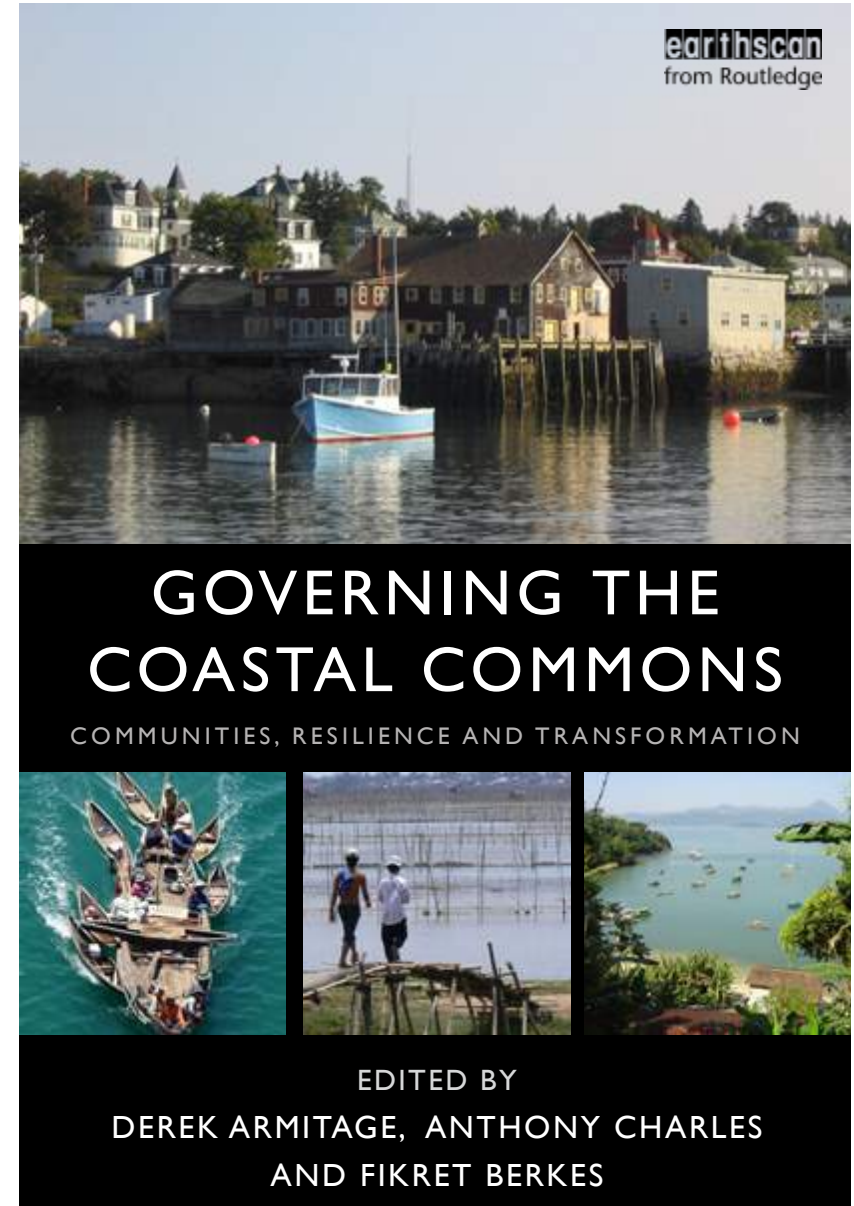


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Preface

Most approaches to the **challenges of rapid change in coastal settings** emphasize the vulnerability of coastal communities and their limited capacity to effect positive change. The edited volume, “**Governing the Coastal Commons**”, takes a different perspective. We show how communities are engaging with a wide range of actors in proactive ways to **respond to rapid change** in the coastal commons and to create better, more sustainable conditions for themselves and their environments. These efforts are referred to as ‘**deliberate transformations**’.

Deliberate transformations can come in many different forms and at many different scales, (e.g., social, ecological, social-ecological, and governance or institutional), each with different implications. Sometimes these transformations involve social-ecological conditions more generally. But often times the focus is on **shifts in the governance processes and institutions** through which people and individual communities make decisions to seek alternative pathways of development. The outcomes of transformations are not always clearly positive, and the change processes rarely straightforward. But the lessons and insights from the cases in this volume highlight the inspiring efforts of coastal communities around the world.

Lesson Four: Characterizing Success

All the cases in this volume show evidence or elements of success, but in different ways. **Characterizing success** then becomes a key focal point for how we critically reflect upon transformations and the narratives used to describe them. In some cases, success is relatively easy to measure

through socioeconomic data such as improved incomes or livelihoods, or through biophysical measures, such as habitat or fishery stock improvement. In other cases, success is not easy to measure, as there are no obvious indicators. Moreover, the **challenge of scaling up** may be an important dimension of how successful transformations are characterized.

France

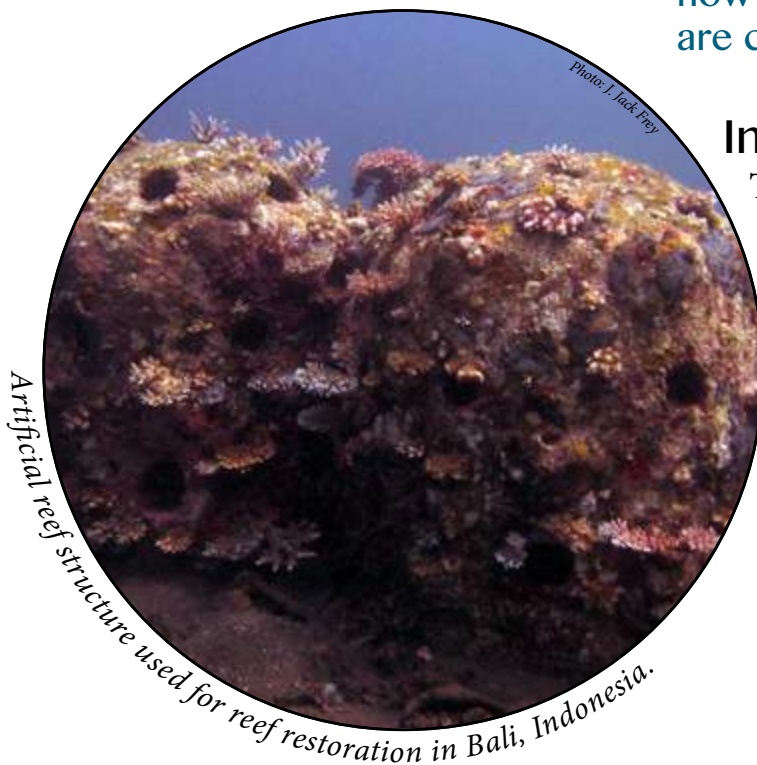
In the Camargue region and the Delta du Rhone Biosphere Reserve, 'success' involved considering both ecological vulnerabilities and economic vulnerabilities, and taking measures to enhance ecological, social and institutional resilience. Focusing on one goal was not enough for success — a holistic systems perspective was needed. Success could also be assessed in terms of the governance system that was created — in particular, its strong participatory component and multi-level networking.

Solomon Islands

The transformation to community-based management is relatively profound. Yet, for individuals and communities, success is mixed and heterogeneous, as there are tensions with scale.

Indonesia

The ecological restoration of coral reefs in Bali increased coral cover (a measurable biophysical indicator). However, the success of the Bali case includes empowerment, community pride, the development of self-organization and stewardship ethics.



Lesson Five: Practical Strategies

Key Practical Strategies

Transformations of the coastal commons are political, and shaped by contestations, inequitable relations of power and dynamic definitions of success. However, they are invariably practical as well.

Ongoing efforts to support **deliberate transformations** and build the **resilience of coastal communities** will require theoretically-informed and **practical strategies** reflected in the cases we outline. Some of the strategies are policy-oriented, while others are focused on taking action, as in partnership building.

- 1 Using and respecting knowledge of different types
- 2 Creating a **supportive policy context**, such as involving new legislation, rules and incentives serving to foster transformative change
- 3 Transforming mindsets
- 4 Drawing on a **local institution** to shift policies for greater sustainability and participatory governance

Using practical strategies often means trying different ones and learning-by-doing. The cases in this volume show that the actual mix of strategies will vary based on the social-ecological system and nature of the challenges being faced. But the practical strategies reflected here provide guidance for communities and their partners engaging in transformative efforts to protect the coastal commons for future generations.



Fisher from Cau Hai Lagoon, Vietnam.



Fishing boats docked in the Dominica.



Vulnerable coastline in Jamaica.

Conclusion

Governing the Coastal Commons is one of the first efforts to adopt a transformations focus on coastal commons and communities. Using multiple examples from different parts of the world, we show the complex ways in which changes unfold, and the challenges and complexities of understanding **deliberate governance transformations**.

The experiences reflected here show that transformations do not always work and are not necessarily desirable — at least for some sectors of the society being transformed and for some powerful interests. **Transformations in the coastal commons are inevitably contested.** Still, notions of transformation in the coastal commons serve as a useful boundary concept to ask questions about linked social-ecological changes and strategies needed to move toward sustainability.

In the context of changing coastal commons, the **feedbacks and challenges confronting social and ecological systems** are not going to be resolved through incremental improvements in conventional practices. Rather they reflect the situations which demand (and create) opportunities to rethink more fundamentally how coastal communities and commons will continue to coexist in ways that support human wellbeing and maintain the ecosystems upon which we depend.

Governing the Coastal Commons

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